

Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* (1904)

([1904], p.117: IV. *Poimandres* and the Egyptian Revelation Literature.

A. Hermes and his Pupils.

In view of the peculiarity of Egyptian religious ideas and our still scant knowledge of their local differences, the question of how closely Hermetic literature connects to certain cults and cultic representations may be judged almost entirely by external forms. They show a remarkable firmness and give partly very old and very valuable notice.¹

Apparently the most widespread form (and into which literature of the *Poimandres* community also leads, as with CH 13) is where Hermes actually gives instructions to his son Tat.² Relatively early on, two bodies of literature were formed and separated: the *Genikoi Logoi* and the *Dixodikoi Logoi*. The connection between Tat and Hermes is at first strange, since Tat himself is the Egyptian Hermes. With the introduction of the new name in Hellenistic times, a doubling has taken place, a process often seen on Greek soil in earlier times. That it partially penetrated the cult actually seem to be taught in an odd magic prayer published by Wessely³ and Kenyon⁴: {PGM 7.550-559} φάνηθι μοι ἐν τῇ μαντείᾳ ὁ μεγαλόφρων θεός τρισμέγας Ἐρμῆς, [...] ὁ ἐκ τοῦ ωοῦ [...] λεγε, οἱ δύο θεοὶ οἱ περὶ σέ Θαθ καλεῖται ὁ εἰς θεός Σω [ἐσώτερος⁶] ὁ ἔτερος Ἀφ καλου καγωη, σεσοφη: Βαϊνχωωωχ. {Let the magnificent god, Hermes Thrice-Great, appear to me in divination! Let him appear, he who [possesses] the Four Quarters of Heaven and the Four Pillars of the Earth ... Let him who is in Heaven appear to me, let him who has the ear⁵ ... say, the two gods who are beside you, *Thatth*. One god is called *So* {or: who is the god of *Sho*}, the other *Aph*. Kalou-Kagōēi-Sesophēi-Bainchōōch.”

1) Kurt Sethe has just proved this with excellent examples in his Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens Vol.2.4 (Imhotep, der Asklepios Aegypter, ein Vergötterter Mensch aus der Zeit des Königs Doser [1902]). Since my account was written before Sethe's book appeared, I leave where we are in agreement unaltered, mentioning only the differences.

2) For the spelling of the name (Thoyti, Thatth, Thot, Tat etc.) see Spielberg, Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes Vol.23, p.199. *Tenuis* and *aspirata* alternate indiscriminately.

3) Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften [1893], p.38 Z. 560ff.

4) Cat. of Greek Pap. j). 102.

5) Hermes, as primeval god.

6) So Kenyon [...] On that matter, I note that two *doryphoroi* of a god are not rarely encountered in literature, as on pictorial representations; since unfortunately I have not recorded the passages, I refer, for now only to J. Wessely, Denkschriften ... [1893] p.60 Z.2, to Philo, *De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 69 Cohn: ὁ θεὸς δορυφορούμενος ὑπὸ δυεῖν τῶν ἀνωτάτω δυνάμεων ἀρχῆς {God, flanked/ attended by two of the Supreme Powers/Arch-Potencies}, and in the Ἐρμοῦ λόγος "Ισιδος πρὸς Ὑπερ Στοβαeus, Ekl. I 49 p.464, 9 Wachsm {“Of Hermes: A Sermon of Isis to Horus” Excerpt 27.9: “For up above [them all] there are two *doryphoroi* of all Providence, of whom one is the Psychotamias (=Steward, Warden, Carver) of souls, the other their Psychopomp (=Conductor, Pilot, Guide); the Psychotamias ensouls and the Psychopomp is the Dispatcher and Commander of incorporated souls”}. In my opinion the name of Thoth ‘the Great, Great’ is connected to this; for in the Stories of the High Priests of Memphis (F.LI. Griffith p.58) Thoth is called the eight-times great, because the eight dog-headed monkeys are his *doryphoroi*. However, from another view, exactly this had to become the *trismegas* or *trismegistos*, just as the primeval god with eight guards constitutes the Ennead.

Commentary

We know the Edelsteins' Aesculapius project, Emma's particular interest, began in 1934. One intention must have been to support their sponsor, Dr. Owsei Temkin, who was at that time researching Galen of Pergamon; the famed Asclepieion of Pergamon was an Edelstein focus. Galen had also studied at Alexandria, and perhaps they also thought to compare Greek and Egyptian forms of 2nd C. AD religious healing. Also, the Edelsteins' work, Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies [1945] examines text fragments on Imhotep/Imouthes; the Egyptian cult was known to them and within the purview for their project. This explains why we must consider how Reitzenstein's *Poimandres*, seminal as it was in their field and among their colleagues, had already informed their background and influenced their critical approach to the material sourced in Alcoholics Anonymous (1939).

All scholars admit *Dixodikoi Logoi* is very strange term, vaguely translated by some “Detailed Discourses” but more appropriately an enumerated (*diezelthein*) “way through and out”. Further note the same translated in Coptic as *Zōidiakoi Logoi*, according to Christian Wildberg in “The General Discourses of Hermes Trismegistus” pp.3-4 [2014]. It is no coincidence that the Hermeticist's Zodiacial or Twelve-fold ‘Way Out’ evokes both the Twelve Step Program and the Big Book's alternate title: see Bill W., “A Tradition Born of Our Anonymity” The A.A.Grapevine (January 1946). In 1938, the Anonymous Authors selected the Twelve Mortal Torments of CH 13 which appear in the prior ms. ‘Wilson's Original Story’.

A four-fold invocation of (unknown, probably ‘Chaldaean’ Judeo-Egyptian) gods, where Bainchooch may be the ‘Soul of Darkness’ (b' n kkw), see C. Harrauer, Meliouchos: Studien Zur Entwicklung Religiöser Vorstellungen in Griechischen Synkretischen Zaubertexten [1987], p.80; Daniel Richard McBride, Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, Vol. 27 [2000] p.55: “[Harrauer] identifies the functions of Bainchooch with Seth, god of inclement weather, an association derived from the primordial Chaos god Kuk (Darkness).” Also, in Egyptian: ‘the “ba of Nun” is Re’. If corresponding to the Four Forms of Re, do these Chaldaean terms represent a precursor or alternative to the Therapeuts' Four-Fold Hypostases of God in DVC?

1. *Kalou* = Beautiful (Khepri: Sunrise?),
2. *Kagōēi* = Ego-Coming-Into-Being ?? (Re-Herakhty: Noon?)
3. *Sesophēi* = ?? (Re-Atum: Sunset? Afternoon Sun?), Reshepē
4. *Bainchōōch* = Darkness (Seth-Re).

There is no satisfactory explanation for the barbarous names, which may be a garbling of Egyptian god's names. The Solar Deity in three forms (Sol-Om-On) is suggested. We may only speculate if *Sesophēi* is an afternoon/evening corresponding to Jewish ‘Ninth Hour’ 3pm or Mincha?), to whom kyphi incense was burned; perhaps relevant is P. Chester Beatty 9, recto 8.14 (8:19), “Song of the Two Banks which is said at Eventide” to Amun.

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[1904], p.118: According to Prof. Spiegelberg, the name of the one god corresponds to that of the Genius of the Dead, *hpj*. His name appears combined with that of Thoth in the Coptic Magic Papyrus of the second century AD, which Griffith published in the Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache [1900] p.90; "Isis says: My Father, Ape-Thoth". The connection between the two deities also shows the Greek misinterpretation of Hermanubis. In our prayer also, *hpj* seems to be identical to Anubis, previously mentioned as servant of Hermes.

To the Egyptian a differentiation of originally identical gods like Tat and Hermes was facilitated especially in theological literature still by a peculiar view, which K. Sethe has correctly recognized². The wise priest appears as an incarnation of Thoth and is worshipped as Thoth after his death. So at Medinet Habu built in the time of Ptolemy IX Soter II – Euergetes II, there is a small temple of the Memphite High-Priest Teos; he is the "Teos of Ibis", i.e. of Thoth³, (Teephabis) and at the same time Thoth himself. Whether Sethe is correct to think Hermes of Thebes appearing alongside Asclepius of Memphis should be considered in {p.119} the same way, i.e. as oracle-giver and deified man to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.21.134, p.399) – as this same *Teephabis* – that is a point I shall leave undecided. The whole conception explains us how holy books received in the cult, though written by certain priests, are nevertheless ascribed to either Thoth or Hermes. It explains a certain inclination to separate older and younger bearers of the same god-name; at last it explains the alternating conception of the revelation god, who is taken for a man at the same time. It is a sound Egyptian conception, if Plato (in the famous passage of *Philebos* 186) does not know whether he should call Thoth a man or god. From this perception I believe we are able to best explain the separation of Hermes and Tat which was executed at such an early time.

** Text as by K. Preisendanz, Papyri Graecae Magicae, Vol. 2 [1931], p.25. {PGM 7.557-8}

1) Originally *Heru-em-Ānpu*, Horus as Anubis; further in Pietschmann, Pauly-Wissowa I 2647 and 2649. As author of sacred writings, Anubis also seems to have stood in for Hermes-Tat. A memory of it seems to have penetrated from Manetho to the *Excerpta Barbari* (F43c Excerpta Barbari (286,10-19 Frick) Deinceps Mitheorum regna sic: Prota (πρώτα) Anubes [Amusim], qui etiam Aegyptiorum scripturas composuit {Next come the reigns of the Demigods, as follows: first, Anubes [of Amusis], who also composed the writings of the Egyptians} (cf. Müller on the passage and Tatian 39)

2) A.a.O. p.8; cf. Fr. W. von Bissing, Deutsche Literaturzeitung: für Kritik der internationalen Wissenschaft, Vol. 23 [1902] sp. 2329.

3) Cf. Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum Vol.I p.167: Ἐρμῆς Φιβί ὁ Τρισμέγιστος Φιβί ὁ Τρισμέγιστο {Hermes Phibis the Thrice-Great}.

Commentary

Around 500 BC, the euhemerization of Egyptian gods spread across the Mediterranean Basin. After the Ptolemies took power (c.330 BC), Egyptian Thoth and Greek Hermes were consciously syncretized. This adaptation, a divinization of human priest unto his god, models the cults fundamentally, and a key Father-Son dyad is explicitly if not originally Hermetic. If the Christian formulation sounds suspiciously similar, Philo Judaeus had presented the Two-Power thesis in earlier works. Egyptian priest Manetho (c.250 BC) cited three Thoths; Hermes had replaced and superseded Thoth. At the same time, a similar process was occurring for Asclepius/Imouthes, and all these gods were merged or rationalized into a dynasty of demigods in Ptolemaic Egypt. Then, the state-sanctioned 'new myth' was taught in Hellenizing schools attached to different temples (250-50 BC): one key function of the Alexandrian library was to generate such propaganda. Now, the ultimate question is how this 'pagan' Hermetica came to be expressed as 'Jewish' – precisely when and why (i.e. under what circumstances) the known supposed 'Judaic' myth historically and culturally joined Graeco-Egyptian material.

The simplest solution is that Semitic scholars of the Alexandrian Library created a local mythos for Proto-Jews of the Siriad/Sethrum, the original Sethians. Without proof, we can only assume a thriving synagogue culture had existed among the affluent farmers settled in the Siriad, c.50 BC, 'Jews' descended from Alexander the Great's Philistine mercenaries. Such Judeo-Egyptian settlers lived free from control of the Jerusalem Temple and loosely adapted Mosaic Law. Their heterodox culture, accessible to outsiders and operative at certain healing centers in the Mediterranean, permitted Jews and Pagans to mix. Eventually, Jewish authorities would call them Minim.

This explains Philo's Therapeuta as 1st C. Judaic theosophers descended from the Asaphim of the OT, an enchanting caste of Egyptian 'Chaldaeans' before the Ptolemies. They were Sethian scribes and healers who created some of the pseudepigraphic Hermetic writings in the First C. BC.

Reitzenstein imagines Hermetic culture appearing around the time of Plato (c.450 BC), still popularized and exposed in the 2nd C. AD. Therefore, Philo Judaeus knew the philosophy of the *Hermetica*; Reitzenstein theorized that Philo's work showed this (sources?!). If true, it logically follows that the Therapeuta/ *Aletheian Anthropoi* were the best candidates and most likely authors of the Jewish *Hermetica*. The Edelsteins adopted this premise.

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([1904], p.136: IV. Poimandres and the Egyptian revelatory literature.

From long fragments of the *Kore Kosmou* preserved by Joannes Stobaeus and in the introduction to an alchemical writing¹, Isis owes her Wisdom to another god (whose cover we can judge) as shown in two doctrinal teachings addressed to Horus. It is a type we have already identified in CH 12, where Hermes, disciple of Agathos Daimon, teaches the action. As will be shown later, this also corresponds to CH 13, where Hermes, pupil of Poimandres, teaches Tat. As the creation account of the *Kore Kosmou* is undoubtedly contaminated from two older versions, we should not be surprised to find two (actually four) different introductions. Hermes, who witnessed the entire creation, first appears as the teacher of Isis²; Isis seems to have found his secret books or heard his tales.³ Besides this is a second report (discussed on p.122), according to which Hermes takes his divine *doryphoroi* with him when he ascends to heaven, but leaves Tat on earth, as heir of his teachings (guided by Ptah-Hephaestus, Asklepios has joined him). The fact that after the ascension but before the περιέχω {=victory, encompassing} of the Δύναμις Μεγίστη {=Dynamis Megisti: Higher Power}, Hermes apologizes that he {H.} was not able to reveal everything to his son {T.} because of the latter's youth obviously serves in the typical manner to render the Isis-Hermes revelations greater than those disseminated in the dialogues of Hermes, Tat and Asklepius.

The type is quite old. We encounter it not only in the oldest Coptic magic papyrus.⁴ Already in the Egyptian prelude, which is common to the known

Commentary

Reitzenstein has Hermes as the teacher of Isis, though in Phoenician Byblos (c.125 AD), Lucian had been initiated into the cult of Adonis cult (who some claimed as Osiris, he reports) at the Temple of Baalat Gebal (Astarte = Isis). Isis is mother/protector of Horus; Osiris should be the Spouse and Father. The advent of Hermetic interpretation dates to the period of the Ptolemies, c.300 BC at the earliest, but the traditions of Osiris were undoubtedly older.

Reitzenstein suggests the literatures of Hermes-Isis, Hermes-Tat, Hermes-Asklepius were all distinct. Perhaps these were different cults which the Ptolemies sought to unify after 250 BC? If a Platonic undercurrent is evident, there is likely an Alexandrian origin, a cosmopolitan agenda.

Hermes (i.e. Thoth) as the primeval god with two divine *doryphoroi* recalls 'Yahweh and the Two Angels (i.e. Three Men) who appear to Abraham in Genesis 18:2.

The Jews recognized that God 'hid' under other names:

"And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of *El-Shaddai*, but by my name *Yahweh* was I not known to them" (Exodus 6:3).

1) Marcellin Berthelot, Collection des Anciens Alchimistes Grecs, Texts pp.28-35, in duplicate. The fragment seems quite old. In this literature, the counter-image to Isis is Maria the Jewess, i.e. Miriam, sister of Moses, who also plays a role in Gnostic literature (Bieß, Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft I ?? 1360). It is well-known she is encountered in the Therapeutae cult as a prophetess beside the prophet Moses. That she appears again as a herald of secret wisdom suggests a certain longevity and efficaciousness for such a cult.

2) Stobaeus 1.49 p.386 ff. Wachsmuth: "Yet Isis is not the source of the teaching; she is the medium of a greater authority who is none other than Hermes himself."

3) That would correspond to the fiction of CH 13 (14), this from the CH12 (CH 13) piece. {In *Stobaei Hermetica* 23.33, Isis discusses with son Horus a revelation from the first Hermes given by her grandfather Kamephis, probably distinct from Kneph-Agathodemon (Nock and Festugière, 1945-1954, Vol.3, p.164).}

4) From the 2nd C. AD, see Griffith, Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache 1900 p.90. Isis appears here as the daughter of Hermes; she is to him like Horus to her, Tat to Hermes, Asklepios to Ptah, Osiris to Kneph/Chnuphis. She is also Daughter of Hermes in the magic hymns, cf. Herwerden, *Mnemosyne* 1888 p.339. cf. further H. Brugsch, Religion und Mythologie der Aegypter 644 and Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 3.

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[[1904], p.139:

From this type, in which *Agathos Daimon* appears as a student of Hermes, the report of Pseudo-Manetho in Syncellus (I p.72 Dind.) can then be explained: 'He said they were inscribed in a sacred language and priestly characters by Thoth, the first Hermes, and translated after the flood from the sacred language {into the Greek tongue} with hieroglyphic characters. When the work had been arranged in books by the son {i.e. Hermes Trismegistos} of Agathodaimon (second Hermes), the father of Tat {i.e. Hermes T.}, in the inner sanctuaries of Egypt's temples...' ²⁾ This artfully executed genealogy of the gods of revelation is, for the most part, old. ³⁾

Thus the second type remains to be traced, and many a detour the reader will have to anticipate, since Egyptian religious thought corresponds so little to ours. The words ὅπότ' ἐμὲ καὶ τῷ τελείῳ μέλανι ἐτίμησε {whereupon we were honored with the perfect ink} which are still curiously referred to as 'the ink with which Hermetic books were written' have found their explanation in a magic papyrus ⁴⁾: {I call upon you, Mistress Isis, with whom Agathos-Daimon has conjoined in the entirety of the Blackness/Final Melancholy}. The strange verb συνεχώρησεν {to come/pour together with} for συνεγένετο {to be born with} seems at first chosen to love an etymological game, because the tense word *chnum*, as mentioned, means 'to unite, to join'.

1) Brugsch, *Reise nach der großen Oase El-Khargeh* p. 48. This is also an etymological game, cf. Moret, *Annales du Musée Guimet* Vol. 14 *Le culte divin journalier* p.132: 'Ammon, whose Name is hidden (amen) more than his Powers.'

2) The nonsensical gloss has spoiled the otherwise intelligible text. To be compared are the accounts of Josephus on the writings of Seth and of his descendants, κατὰ γῆν τὴν Σειριάδα {in the land of Siriad = Sethrum} (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.71), as well as what Philo of Byblos reports about the inscriptions of the oldest Tat in τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδύτων εὑρεθεῖσιν ἀποκρύφοις Αμμουνείων (Άμμουνέων Edd.) γράμμασι συγκειμένους {Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 1.9.26 the secret works composed in letters of the Ammoneans [followers of Ammon (?)] found in the sanctuaries}. Herewith again the inscription of the hymns of El-Khargel is to be compared.

3) For genealogy cf. among others Varro *De gente populi Romani* by Augustine *De Civitate Dei* 18.3 and 8: Isis, daughter of Inachus or coming from Ethiopia, teaches writing (cf. 39. 40); younger is the first Mercurius, grandson of Atlas the astrologer and grand-nephew of Prometheus the philosopher; his grandson is Mercurius Trismegistus, considered by the Egyptians as the inventor of philosophy (39). Older (or according to others younger) is Herakles. Herewith is a scheme can be easily reconciled: 1) Isis, 2) Hermes #1, 3) Agathos-Daimon 4) Hermes #2. {=Isis, Thoth, Agathodaimon, Hermes Trismegistus}.

4) Wessely, Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Classe, 42. Bd. 2. Abhandlung [1893] p.37 Z. 500.

Commentary

See Christian H. Bull, The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus [2018], pp.47-8: "Syncellus provides a letter, supposedly written by Manetho, to Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and prefaces the letter with an explanatory note on several Egyptian Hermeses.⁶² In *The Book of Sothis*, he says, Manetho claimed to have consulted monuments lying in the 'Seriadic land,' a name for Egypt that is clearly derived from Isis and Osiris' connection with the Dog Star, Sothis or Sirius (Σειρίος):⁶³

χρηματίσας ἐκ τῶν ἐν τῇ Σηριαδικῇ γῇ (σο) κειμένων στηλῶν ἱερᾶ φησι διαλέκτῳ καὶ ἱερογραφικοῖς γράμμασι κεχαρακτηρισμένων ὑπὸ Θώθ τοῦ πρώτου Ἐρμοῦ καὶ ἔρμηνευθεισῶν μετὰ τὸν κατακλυσμὸν [ἐκ τῆς ἱερᾶς διαλέκτου εἰς τὴν Ἑλληνίδα φωνὴν] γράμμασιν ἱερογλυφικοῖς, καὶ ἀποτεθέντων ἐν βιβλοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀγαθοδαίμονος υἱοῦ τοῦ δευτέρου Ἐρμοῦ πατρὸς δὲ τοῦ Τάτ ἐν τοῖς ἀδύτοις τῶν ἱερῶν Αἰγύπτου"

G.R.S. Mead, Thrice Greatest Hermes: Excerpts and Fragments Vol.2, p.149: "... from Kamēphis when he did honour me with the Black [Rite] that gives perfection" (19).1

1 ὅπότ' ἐμὲ καὶ τῷ τελείῳ μέλανι ἐτίμησεν. This has hitherto been always supposed by the philological mind simply to refer to the mysteries of ink or writing, and that too without any humorous intent, but in all portentous solemnity. We must imagine, then, presumably, that it refers to the school-days of Isis ... I would suggest, therefore, that we have here a reference to the most esoteric institution of the Isiac tradition, the more precise nature of which we will consider later on; it is enough for the moment to connect it with certain objects or shows that were apparently made to appear in the dark.

Reitzenstein sees Agathos-Daimon as Khnum (~Yahu) in this, see Mead, Vol. 2, p.155. Also note a trivial reference in W. Scott's Hermetica, Vol. 3 [1926], pp.478-9: ... Ἰσι, ἡ συνεχώρησεν ὁ Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων βασιλεύειν ἐν τῷ τελείῳ μέλανι, which misses the point here. This syncretic Judaized Egyptian god *Khnum* (i.e. Source of the Nile) – 'to join or pour together' – definitely suggests both the Tide-Flood Motif (i.e. mystically conjoining with the deity) and Concrete/Builder's Trope (i.e. conglomerating with other souls). So too the entire Fellowship concept is echoed in a phrase suggesting a papyrus fragment, that "little chip of a book", an offering in the perfect ink: AA (1939). This implies our Anonymous Authors consciously wrote an occult Judeo-Egyptian hermetic kabbalah under Isis and the Alexandrian Serpent-God, perhaps unified as Serapis-Isis. Unsurprisingly, AA's Creator does not resemble the Christian God for the simple reason He really is not.

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[[1904], pp.183-4:

I already mentioned above that important passage of Josephus (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.71), according to which the pious Seth and his descendants write their knowledge on two Stelae: 'Now this remains in the land of Siriad to this day.' ¹⁾ As Plew (Jahrb. f. Phil. 1868 p.839) already saw, this reminds us even in form of the Hermetic doctrine in Pseudo-Manetho (above p.139): 'having used pillars written in the land of Siriad'. These were erected by the First Hermes before the Flood, and Agathos-Daimon, son of the Second Hermes, interpreted after ²⁾. By an inscription, the Siriad is attested as the home of Isis; the goddess herself is called Niloitic or Siriac ³⁾; she is the fruitful earth and is Egypt. It is unnecessary to think of Ethiopia with Plew ⁴⁾; evidently, it is first a sacred formula. Josephus will have thought hard where the land mentioned in his source lay. But that this source has descendants of the pious Seth dwelling in Egypt – or Ethiopia – and writing their secret knowledge on stelae there is important. It will have moved Adam's later residence there, because the Egyptians are supposed to be the first people and to have taught all peoples the cult of the gods. That the Egyptians knew a god Seth, may have contributed.⁵⁾

Commentary

The significance of Seth cannot be overstated. The Sethians of Egypt, after the Rechabites and Therapeutae, were 'water-drinkers': Jewish teetotalers. Judeo-Egyptian mysticism appears to be a sober profession. The Sethian cult corresponds with Hermes-Agathodaimon-Thoth, and 'Seth' is also an Egyptian god

1) Σειρίδα Niese, Σιριάδα and Σηρειάδ individual branches of the tradition.

5) How in Egypt the Jewish Seth merged with the brother of Osiris, who is also worshipped as a powerful god, is partly still obscure (see the especially instructive spell in Wessely, Denkschr. d. K. K. Akad. Akad. 1893 p.54). For the later Sethians at least some Preuschen, Festgruß f. Bernh. Stade 240 ff, but the question must probably be treated again in a broader context.

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([1904], pp.183-4:

Again, the fragment of a Hermetic writing cited by John the Lydian points us in other directions ²⁾: "There has been and still is much disagreement among the many theologians regarding the god worshipped by the Hebrews. For the Egyptians — and Hermes [Trismegistus] first of all — theologize that he is Osiris, 'the one who exists,' about whom Plato says in the *Timaeus* (27d): 'What is it that always exists, and has no 'coming-to-be'; and what is it that comes to be, but never exists?'" This points to a writing which wished to recover Egyptian epithets for the Supreme God in Plato, on the one hand, and, on the other, in Jewish literature, and to make Osiris the general god. I would put no weight at all on the indication with this character of the writing, if it did not gain a surprising confirmation by a rather old magic formula, the demon exorcism of the writer in Jeû ³⁾: 'The Stele of the Hieroglyphist Jeu, in His Epistle' ⁴⁾ I summon You, Headless One, who created Earth and Heaven, who created Night and Day, who created Light and Darkness, You are Osoronnophris ⁵⁾, whom no man has ever seen, You are Iabas ⁶⁾, You are Iapôs/ Blessed art thou as thou art. You have discriminated the Just and the Unjust, You have made Male and Female, You have produced seeds and fruits, You have caused men to love one and to hate one another. ⁷⁾, I am Moses Your Prophet, to whom You transmitted Your Mysteries, the Ceremonies of Israel; You brought forth the moist and the dry and all manner of nourishment, Hear me: I am an angel ...

Commentary

Reitzenstein's curious line of inquiry raises the question of the Jewish God as (an expression of) Osiris, an adaptation of (Judeo-Egyptian) Chaldaeans perhaps influenced by Plato. Therefore, the Jewish God was recent, c.400-300 BC. On the Testimony of Varro, c.75 BC (in *De Mensibus* 4.53): "...The Roman Varro, when discussing Him/God, says that among the Chaldaeans (Babylonian Jews), in their mystical [writings], He is called 'Iaô,' meaning 'mentally-perceived Light' (Noetic Light) in the language of the Phoenicians, as Herennius [Philo] says. This would suggest that a Semitic interpretation of Osiris-Usorus occurred in the distant past (c.500-400 BC), perhaps by scribes at Taposiris Magna, near the Jewish barracks and later colony of Philo's mysterious Therapeuta, appealed to a civic goal of social harmony though a conscious and deliberate syncretization. The God "Iao" (Yahu) was Phoenician-Canaanite and fluid, rather than 'Jewish' (in the strict sense that Judaism is now imagined a set, unitary religion), although we cannot now be certain that the Second Temple in Jerusalem excluded all varieties of Judaic 'God'. However, Iao as Noetic Light seems advanced and rather late, c.25 AD, and recalls the Hermetic cosmogony of *Poimandres*. Reitzenstein offers merely the hint that the Jewish god has strong Egyptian origins, but this was especially intriguing to the Anonymous Authors (who reconstructed an entire modern philosophy out of the theoretical possibility of this strange heterodox Jewish mysticism).

2) Varro (75 BC) in *De Mensibus* 4.53 p.109, = FGrH 790, frg. 7; Stern, No. 324; 13 Wünsch.

3) Wessely, Denkschr. d. K. K. Akad. 1888 p. 129 Z. 96, cf. Kenyon, Greek Pap. Cat. I p. 68. Demon exorcisms are known to have been encountered very early in Egypt. The Jewish magicians adopted them; cf. Josephos Ant. 7.46.

4) A Jeû book in epistle form is thus attested.

5) The good Osiris, cult name.

6) Blau (Das altjüd. Zauberwesen 131) interprets the name from the Samaritan pronunciation of the tetragrammaton (λαβε, Iaβα). For Samaria, indeed, the spell would fit.

7) They are the works regularly praised to Isis, respectively Osiris.

Reitzenstein's Poimandres (1904)

[[1904], pp.233-4:

It would be more important if it could be proved that Simon of Gitta, the Samaritan 'sorcerer,' is influenced by Egypt. Only under this condition the dependence of the Barbelo-Gnostics on the Egyptian theology would be probable. As is known, the novelistic representation lets him learn magic in Egypt and constantly recite 'Hermetic' phrases, i.e. terms of Hellenistic mysticism, in the disputes. In any case, Egyptian influences are indicated by the idea of a pair of saviors, especially since Helena still reminds completely of Isis in the late reports.¹

So much of the details. A word of explanation is required only for the peculiar form of pantheism, which, as I mentioned earlier, has almost completely replaced the non-Egyptian dualism in our writing. It is especially obvious to the philologist to assume for it Greek origin; just here it would be least justified. A developed pantheism showed basically already the London inscription and that older song of Ptah, which I mentioned above p.61. The hymns to the sun god as the all-god, who animates the child in the womb and gives him the soul, who created the earth and all beings according to his will, show his becoming under Akhenaten {1340 BC}. One lives only through him, and his counsel is glorious and sublime. He is beautiful; he is strong in his love. He lives in the heart of the worshipping king; for no one knows him but this, his son; the counsel of God makes him wise.² It is a philosophical elaboration of a local cult, which for this very reason makes the claim to universality, so strange for Egypt, and briefly calls itself 'the doctrine'.

1) Cf. *Recognitions* II. 12, trans. Pratten, et al., 199: Lunam vero, quae secum, est, esse de superioribus caelis dedudam, eandemque amctorum genetricem asserit esse Sapientiam {Luna, who is with him, has been brought down from the higher heavens, and that she is Wisdom, the mother of sapient things.} Clem. I 25 p. 29, 1 Lag.: αὐτὴν δὲ τὴν Ἐλένην ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνωτάτων οὐρανῶν κατενηνοχέναι λέγει τῷ κόσμῳ κυρίαν οὐσαν, ὡς παμμήτορα οὐείαν καὶ Σοφίαν (cf. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 52 and 43). {A certain holiday, by them called Osiris's ascent into the moon, and they account it the beginning of their spring. Thus they place the power of Osiris in the moon, and affirm him to be there married with Isis, which is Generation.} It is the redeemer of the *Kore Kosmou*, of which we will also be reminded by indications in the martyrdom of Peter. Should this idea of a pair of redeemers have led to the prominence of Miriam in the cult of the Therapeuts (Philo, DVC 88), Dieterich, Abrahas 147? θεραπευταί and μελανηφόροι mentions in the cult of Isis the inscription CIG 2, 2295 = ID 2079 (Delos, 115/114 BC).

2) Breasted, *De hymnis in Solem sub rege Amenophide IV. conceptis*. Berlin 1894.

3) *Reise nach der großen Oase El-Khargeh* p.27 ff.

Commentary

The Gnostic leader Simon Magus (65 AD) and his consort, Helena were a husband-and-wife team of Samaritans and 'saviors.' (The Edelsteins may have casually copied this pretense as a literary guise.) The suggestion that Simon had been educated in a Hermetic community of Christos followers in Egypt (c.35 AD) has extraordinary implications, however: namely, that the 'First Christians' were Hermeticists and Egyptian. This presupposes the historical Jesus had also been educated in the same community of Jewish *mystes*: a Redeemer Cult which (following Reitzenstein's thesis) may have some connection to Alexandrian Isis/Kore.

Known since 1931, Herod's Temple of Kore (c.30 BC) at Samaria-Sebaste proves this Egyptian goddess was worshiped by Semites of Palestine in Philo's day. At the Koreion in Alexandria, Epiphanius (51.22.9) describes a pagan celebration (c.375 AD) of Aion's birth, an obvious parallel to the Christian Virgin & Child (the Birth of Jesus was long assumed January 6th, the same date). By implication, the Christos cult worshiped an older Mother & Child dyad with suggestively Egyptian origins. All of this supports the basic idea that our Anonymous Authors interpreted "First Century Christianity" in this project as an Alexandrian phenomenon which emerged from (Hermetic) Sethian Judaism and Serapis worship. From AA's perspective, the Osiris-Isis Lunar Theme, as the generation of Salvation, is a strange note.

Whether or not Jesus was a member of the heterodox Therapeutae (as Jung believed), Philo's colony was probably located just east of Taposiris Magna, a major Osiris cult center, at Plinthine (plinthos, squared stone). They would have been Semitic healers well versed in Egyptian myth and cults far beyond the Jewish Temple practices, and as writers (trained by Librarians of Alexandria) they were cultural innovators after the model of their Chaldaean forbearers.